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For Immediate Release
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First Positive Rabies Case in Southwest Nebraska

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has confirmed the first positive rabies case in southwest Nebraska for the year. The rabies exposure was with a cat in Furnas County.

“Even animals that may look friendly should be treated with caution if you are unfamiliar with them. Due to the unseasonably warm weather early this season, there have been many animals out and about. Teaching your children about animal safety is extremely important to prevent any possible exposure to rabies,” explains Melissa Propp, RN Clinic Manager with SWNPHD.

In cats as in other warm-blooded animals, rabies is a severe, rapidly progressing neurological disease. It is transmitted through saliva, most commonly through contact with an infected wild animal.

Rabies should be suspected in all animals that show a sudden change in behavior that is different from normal, such as animals normally active at night being seen during the day. Signs of rabies in animals may include any of the following:

- Difficulty with eating or drinking
- Increased aggression
- General sickness
- Excessive drooling
- Odd behavior changes, nervousness, irritability

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rabies is a medical emergency. Any person with a suspected exposure should wash wounds immediately with soap and water and seek medical attention from a healthcare professional right away. Rabies is a deadly viral infection that affects the nervous system of humans and other mammals if not treated quickly after an exposure.

The best method to prevent human exposure is to ensure that pets, livestock, and horses are protected against rabies with current vaccinations. Contact your local veterinarian, local healthcare provider and public health department regarding rabies vaccination, testing, and exposures.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. For more information call

Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Instagram.

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